

stereotypic perceptions of infants as
cards. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*,

for greeting cards. *Marketing*, 104,

uring sex stereotypes: A thirty nation

er reports that boy cards are more likely
yme than girl cards, which in turn are
e likely to rhyme than gender-unspeci-
cards. What does she suggest accounts
he difference? Why might the unspeci-
cards be least likely to rhyme? Work
two or three classmates and compose
nes for unspecified baby cards.

u speak another language and have
ss to greeting cards in that language,
e an informal survey of the baby cards
find. In what ways are they similar to
ards Willer describes? In what ways
rent? Report your results to the class.

Writing

might Willer's report be changed for
ication as a feature article in a Sunday
paper? What might need to be added
leted for a more general audience?
ine that you are a journalist; write an
once-grabbing introductory paragraph
n article reporting on Willer's results,
would you like to see gender treated
by cards? Even if you are generally
y with such cards, you may have
ideas about how they might be more
esting. Write a letter to a card company
ch you suggest ideas for changes in
cards; back up your suggestions with
ns and examples.

**PENELOPE ECKERT
AND SALLY MCCONNELL-GINET**

Learning to Be Gendered

DICHOTOMOUS BEGINNINGS: IT'S A BOY! IT'S A GIRL!

In the famous words of Simone de Beauvoir,¹ "Women are not born, they are made." The same is true of men. The making of a man or a woman is a never-ending process that begins before birth—from the moment someone begins to wonder if the pending child will be a boy or a girl. And the ritual announcement at birth that it is in fact one or the other instantly transforms an "it" into a "he" or a "she" (Butler 1993), standardly assigning it to a lifetime as a male or as a female.² This attribution is further made public and lasting through the linguistic event of naming. To name a baby Mary is to do something that makes it easy for a wide range of English speakers to maintain the initial "girl" attribution. In English-speaking societies, not all names are sex-exclusive (e.g., Chris, Kim, Pat), and sometimes names change their gender classification. For example, Evelyn was available as a male name in Britain long after it had become an exclusively female name in America, and Whitney, once exclusively a surname or a male first name in America, is now bestowed on baby girls. In some times and places, the state or religious institutions disallow sex-ambiguous given names. Finland, for example, has lists of legitimate female and legitimate

1. Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986) French philosopher, novelist, and social analyst. De Beauvoir's 1953 book, *The Second Sex*, explores women's need for independence.

2. Nowadays, with the possibility of having this information before birth, wanting to know in advance or not wanting to know can become ideologically charged. Either way, the sex of the child is frequently as great a preoccupation as its health. [Eckert & McConnell-Ginet's note]

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This selection from a 2003 book, *Language and Gender*, by Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet, takes a detailed look at gender socialization in the first days and years of a baby's life. Eckert is a linguistics professor and director of the women's studies program at Stanford University; she is the author of *Linguistic Variation as Social Practice* (2000) and *Jocks and Burnouts: Social Categories and Identity in High School* (1989). McConnell-Ginet is a professor of linguistics at Cornell University; in addition to publications in formal semantics, she has written several works on language and gender together with Eckert. This selection examines everyday behavior so ordinary that we barely notice it; as you read, think about how many times in the last month you have done or said something that Eckert and McConnell-Ginet describe.
.....

male names that must be consulted before the baby's name becomes official. Thus the dichotomy of male and female is the ground upon which we build selves from the moment of birth. These early linguistic acts set up a baby for life, launching a gradual process of learning to be a boy or a girl, a man or a woman, and to see all others as boys or girls, men or women as well. There are currently no other legitimate ways to think about ourselves and others—and we will be expected to pattern all kinds of things about ourselves as a function of that initial dichotomy. In the beginning, adults will do the child's gender work, treating it as a boy or as a girl, and interpreting its every move as that of a boy or of a girl. Then over the years, the child will learn to take over its part of the process, doing its own gender work and learning to support the gender work of others. The first thing people want to know about a baby is its sex, and convention provides a myriad of props to reduce the necessity of asking—and it becomes more and more important, as the child develops, not to have to ask. At birth, many hospital nurseries provide pink caps for girls and blue caps for boys, or in other ways provide some visual sign of the sex that has been attributed to the baby. While this may seem quite natural to members of the society, in fact this color coding points out no difference that has any bearing on the medical treatment of the infants. Go into a store in the United States to buy a present for a newborn baby, and you will immediately be asked "boy or girl?" If the reply is "I don't know" or, worse, "I don't care," sales personnel are often perplexed. Overalls for a girl may be OK (though they are "best" if pink or flowered or in some other way marked as "feminine"), but gender liberalism goes only so far. You are unlikely to buy overalls with vehicles printed on them for a girl, and even more reluctant to buy a frilly dress with puffed sleeves or pink flowered overalls for a boy. And if you're buying clothing for a baby whose sex you do not know, sales people are likely to counsel you to stick with something that's plain yellow or green or white. Colors are so integral to our way of thinking about gender that gender attributions have bled into our view of the colors, so that people tend to believe that pink is a more "delicate" color than blue. This is a prime example of the naturalization of what is in fact an arbitrary sign. In America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000) reports, blue was favored for girls and bright pink for boys.

If gender flowed naturally from sex, one might expect the world to sit back and simply allow the baby to become male or female. But in fact, sex determination sets the stage for a lifelong process of gendering, as the child becomes, and learns how to be, male or female. Names and clothing are just a small part of the symbolic resources used to support a consistent ongoing

gender attribution even when children are clothed. That we can speak of a child growing up as a girl or as a boy suggests that initial sex attribution is far more than just a simple observation of a physical characteristic. *Being a girl* or *being a boy* is not a stable state but an ongoing accomplishment, something that is actively done both by the individual so categorized and by those who interact with it in the various communities to which it belongs. The newborn initially depends on others to do its gender, and they come through in many different ways, not just as individuals but as part of socially structured communities that link individuals to social institutions and cultural ideologies. It is perhaps at this early life stage that it is clearest that gender is a collaborative affair—that one must learn to perform as a male or a female, and that these performances require support from one's surroundings.

Indeed, we do not know how to interact with another human being (or often members of other species), or how to judge them and talk about them, unless we can attribute a gender to them. Gender is so deeply engrained in our social practice, in our understanding of ourselves and of others, that we almost cannot put one foot in front of the other without taking gender into consideration. Although most of us rarely notice this overtly in everyday life, most of our interactions are colored by our performance of our own gender, and by our attribution of gender to others.

From infancy, male and female children are interpreted differently, and interacted with differently. Experimental evidence suggests that adults' perceptions of babies are affected by their beliefs about the babies' sex. Condry and Condry (1976) found that adults watching a film of a crying infant were more likely to hear the cry as angry if they believed the infant was a boy, and as plaintive or fearful if they believed the infant was a girl. In a similar experiment, adults judged a 24-hour-old baby as bigger if they believed it to be a boy, and finer-featured if they believed it to be a girl (Rubin, Provenzano and Luria 1974). Such judgments then enter into the way people interact with infants and small children. People handle infants more gently when they believe them to be female, more playfully when they believe them to be male.

And they talk to them differently. Parents use more diminutives (*kitty*, *doggie*) when speaking to girls than to boys (Gleason et al. 1994), they use more inner state words (*happy*, *sad*) when speaking to girls (Ely et al. 1995). They use more direct prohibitives (*don't do that!*) and more emphatic prohibitives (*no! no! no!*) to boys than to girls (Bellinger and Gleason 1982). Perhaps, one might suggest, the boys need more prohibitions because they tend to misbehave more than the girls. But Bellinger and Gleason found this pattern

to be independent of the actual nature of the children's activity, suggesting that the adults and their beliefs about sex difference are far more important here than the children's behavior.

With differential treatment, boys and girls eventually learn to be different. Apparently, male and female infants cry the same amount (Maccoby and Jacklin 1974), but as they mature, boys cry less and less. There is some evidence that this difference emerges primarily from differential adult response to the crying. Qualitative differences in behavior come about in the same way. A study of thirteen-month-old children in day care (Fagot *et al.* 1985) showed that teachers responded to girls when they talked, babbled, or gestured, while they responded to boys when they whined, screamed, or demanded physical attention. Nine to eleven months later, the same girls talked more than the boys, and the boys whined, screamed, and demanded attention more than the girls. Children's eventual behavior, which seems to look at least statistically different across the sexes, is the product of adults' differential responses to ways of acting that are in many (possibly most) cases very similar indeed. The kids do indeed learn to "do" gender for themselves, to produce sex-differentiated behavior—although even with considerable differential treatment they do not end up with dichotomizing behavioral patterns.

Voice, which we have already mentioned, provides a dramatic example of children's coming to perform gender. At the ages of four to five years, in spite of their identical vocal apparatus, girls and boys begin to differentiate the fundamental frequency of their speaking voice. Boys tend to round and extend their lips, lengthening the vocal tract, whereas girls are tending to spread their lips (with smiles, for example), shortening the vocal tract. Girls are raising their pitches, boys lowering theirs. It may well be that adults are more likely to speak to girls in a high-pitched voice. It may be that they reward boys and girls for differential voice productions. It may also be that children simply observe this difference in older people, or that their differential participation in games (for example play-acting) calls for different voice productions. Elaine Andersen (1990, pp. 24–25), for example, shows that children use high pitch when using baby talk or "teacher register" in role play. Some children speak as the other sex is expected to and thus, as with other aspects of doing gender, there is not a perfect dichotomization in voice pitch (even among adults, some voices are not consistently classified). Nonetheless, there is a striking production of mostly different pitched voices from essentially similar vocal equipment.

There is considerable debate among scholars about the extent to which adults actually do treat boys and girls differently, and many note that the

similarities far outweigh the differences. Research on early gender development—in fact the research in general on gender differences—is almost exclusively done by psychologists. As a result, the research it reports on largely involves observations of behavior in limited settings—whether in a laboratory or in the home or the preschool. Since these studies focus on limited settings and types of interaction and do not follow children through a normal day, they quite possibly miss the cumulative effects of small differences across many different situations. Small differences here and there are probably enough for children to learn what it means in their community to be male or female.

The significance of the small difference can be appreciated from another perspective. The psychological literature tends to treat children as objects rather than subjects. Those studying children have tended to treat others—parents, other adults, peers—as the primary socializing agents. Only relatively recently have investigators begun to explore children's own active strategies for figuring out the social world. Eleanor Maccoby (2002) emphasizes that children have a very clear knowledge of their gender (that is, of whether they are classified as male or female) by the time they are three years old. Given this knowledge, it is not at all clear how much differential treatment children need to learn how to do their designated gender. What they mainly need is the message that male and female are supposed to be different, and that message is everywhere around them.

It has become increasingly clear that children play a very active role ¹⁰ in their own development. From the moment they see themselves as social beings, they begin to focus on the enterprise of "growing up." And to some extent, they probably experience many of the gendered developmental dynamics we discuss here not so much as gender-appropriate, but as *grown-up*. The greatest taboo is being "a baby," but the developmental imperative is gendered. Being grown-up, leaving babyhood, means very different things for boys than it does for girls. And the fact that growing up involves gender differentiation is encoded in the words of assessment with which progress is monitored—kids do not behave as good or bad people, but as *good boys* or *good girls*, and they develop into *big boys* and *big girls*.³ In other words, they do not have the option of growing into just people, but into boys or girls. This does not mean that they see what they're doing in strictly gendered terms. It is probable that when boys and girls alter the fundamental frequency of

3. Thorne (1993) and others have observed teachers urging children to act like "big boys and girls." Very rarely is a child told "don't act like a baby—you're a big kid now." [Eckert & McConnell-Ginet's note]

their voices they are not trying to sound like *girls* or like *boys*, but that they are aspiring for some quality that is itself gendered—cuteness, authority. And the child's aspiration is not simply a matter of reasoning, but a matter of desire—a projection of the self into desired forms of participation in the social world. Desire is a tremendous force in projecting oneself into the future—in the continual remaking of the self that constitutes growing up.

Until about the age of two, boys and girls exhibit the same play behaviors. After that age, play in boys' and girls' groups begins to diverge as they come to select different toys and engage in different activities, and children begin to monitor play, imposing sanctions on gender-inappropriate play. Much is made of the fact that boys become more agonistic than girls, and many attribute this to hormonal and even evolutionary differences (see Maccoby 2000 for a brief review of these various perspectives). But whatever the workings of biology may be, it is clear that this divergence is supported and exaggerated by the social system. As children get older, their play habits are monitored and differentiated, first by adults, and eventually by peers. Parents of small children have been shown to reward their children's choice of gender-appropriate toys (trucks for boys, dolls for girls) (Langlois and Downs 1980). And while parents' support of their children's gendered behavior is not always and certainly not simply a conscious effort at gender socialization, their behavior is probably more powerful than they think. Even parents who strive for gender equality, and who believe that they do not constrain their children's behavior along gender lines, have been observed in experimental situations to do just that.

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GENDERIZING DISCOURSE: CATEGORY IMPERIALISM

Many discursive practices presuppose the pervasive relevance of gender categorizations. We say that discourse is genderized when messages about gender categorizations are superimposed on the basic content of the discourse. Genderizing discursive practices can involve particular linguistic resources—gendered pronouns, grammatical gender agreement, genderizing affixes and other gender-marked lexical items.

Genderizing discourse does not always, however, depend on linguistic conventions but may involve such matters as journalistic norms to mention the nondefault sex in some field. Stories about a woman murderer or child molester or politician will, for example, use the word *woman* far more than

parallel stories use the word *man*. There are many cases where users can choose gendered or nongendered terms. The teacher can say "good morning, kids" or "good morning, students" or the discourse can be genderized: "good morning, girls and boys." Some years ago, philosopher Elizabeth Beardsley (1981) argued that referential genderization—cases where sex distinctions seem to be forced, whether or not they are relevant—problematically encourages gender inequities by making gender categorizations appear to be relevant where morally they ought not to be.

PRONOUNS

Many communities of practice take establishing and conveying a (consistent) gender attribution for everyone to be of fundamental importance. In English-using communities, for example, gendered pronouns make it difficult indeed to talk about anyone other than oneself without presupposing a gender attribution. The late Sarah Caudwell (a pen name) wrote several novels featuring a protagonist whose gender she never discloses. How did she pull this off? Well, the character's first name is Hilary, used for both sexes, and Hilary relates the stories in the first person, using *I*, which is completely gender-neutral, for self-reference. Others refer to Hilary using that name or some generic description like "my friend," or address Hilary using the second-person *you*, which is also gender-neutral.⁴

Some languages do mark gender in the first- or second-person pronouns. Japanese, for example, has a fairly large array of first-person pronouns, a number of which are gender-marked, as are a number of the second-person pronouns (for speaker and addressee). Interestingly, a considerable number of female Japanese high-school students have now adopted the practice of referring to themselves as *boku*, which is the first-person form boys are expected to use in self-reference and which is also used in reference to very young boys being addressed. Naoko Ogawa and Janet Shibamoto Smith (1997) examined address as well as first- and third-person references used in a documentary film by two gay men in a committed relationship, finding that the two men labeled themselves and the other in much the same ways as do the canonical husband and wife of a traditional Japanese heterosexual marriage.

Pronouns are most often gendered in the third person. As we have already noted, singular English third-person pronouns typically presuppose

4. See Livia (2001) for much interesting discussion of literary uses of pronouns to convey gender messages, and in many cases to challenge standard gender categories. [Eckert & McConnell-Ginet's note]

gender attributions to their (actual or potential) referents. To refer to specific individual human beings pronominally, *it* is seldom used and then it is used either insultingly, to convey that the referent is not conforming properly to gender norms, or in reference to very young babies. Even in reference to babies, it can be seen as dehumanizing. In July 2000 the American Academy of Pediatrics cautioned doctors not to use *it* to speak of a baby born with ambiguous genitalia but instead to speak to parents of "your baby" or "your child." This injunction came in the context of a more general reconsideration of the long-standing assumption that all babies should very quickly be assigned to one sex or the other, often with surgery to make genital appearance conform more closely with the assigned sex or with prescriptions for hormonal or other treatment to produce bodies that conform more closely with the polarized sexing assumed by English third-person singular pronouns. "X" is a 1970s story about a child who was going through the early years with everyone but the parents and the doctor who delivered it ignorant of its sex. It is not insignificant that "Baby X" is so dubbed and not given a personal name; it's much easier to repeat "Baby X" or "X" or even to use an *it* than it would be if we had a proper name for the child (Gould [1972] 1983).

Gender attributions conveyed by the pronouns *he* and *she* are explicit, but they are nonetheless backgrounded, presented as taken for granted. Somewhere around the twelfth or thirteenth century, the masculine form (*hē*) and the feminine form (*hēo*) began frequently to sound alike because the unstressed final vowel of the feminine form was often just dropped. Had that change simply proceeded in the same way that many similar shifts did, we might now have a single third-person singular personal pronoun, presumably pronounced like modern *he*. In that case, we would have found it easy to talk about Baby X, whose sex we did not know or someone whose sex we did not want to reveal. Some English speakers, however, apparently did not want to lose obligatory genderizing of third-person pronominal reference. The actual history is unclear but one hypothesis is that they began using the word *schē*, ancestor of modern *she*, as a substitute for *hēo*. The suggestion is that this form was imported into English from one of the Scandinavian languages then spoken in the British Isles. The etymology of *she* is still disputed. Whether or not English speakers did import a precursor for *she* from another language, it is clear that there was something more going on than standard phonetic developments, which would have left us with a single third-person pronoun for humans. However it actually happened, it must have been the importance of genderizing to then current discursive practices among English speakers that drove this change in the pronominal system.

English does now have a nongendered pronoun for human referents, namely *they*. Prescriptive grammars restrict *they* to plural contexts, but it has long been used in singular generic contexts of the kind we discuss below in the section on generalizing. But what about nongeneric contexts? Increasingly, we find *they* used when sex is unknown or the speaker wants to avoid genderizing. "Someone called but they didn't leave their name" or "A friend of mine claimed they had met the Beatles." Second-person pronouns in English once distinguished plural from singular, but the originally plural form *you* is now virtually the only choice, even if the addressee is a single individual. It would not be surprising, therefore, if *they* were also to become more widely used in singular contexts.

With definite antecedents like *my teacher* or *the photographer*, *they* is still infrequent even colloquially. Definiteness seems to make genderizing of subsequent references hard to avoid. "My teacher promised they would write me a letter of recommendation" still sounds as if the teacher were going to enlist others in the letter writing, and "The photographer forgot to bring their tripod" suggests the tripod is not the photographer's individual property. Still, there are some cases like this where *they* does link to a definite singular antecedent, and such degenderizing may well be spreading. With proper names, however, *they* is still virtually unheard. Discursive practice among English speakers does not yet support interpreting "Chris said they are having their birthday party tomorrow" as Chris's having said that she or he was going to have her or his birthday party tomorrow. Of course there are some nongenderizing options: "My teacher promised to write me a letter of recommendation" or "The photographer forgot to bring the tripod" or "Chris claimed to be having a birthday party tomorrow."

Such alternatives simply eliminate pronouns, but pronoun elimination is not always so easy. Genderizing definite pronominal references is still predominant in the discursive practice of most English speakers though it may begin to wane as more and more speakers use *they* for singular deictic—i.e., "pointing"—references. "What do they think they're doing?" seems unremarkable when one is pointing to a single individual scaling a high rooftop in the distance or referring to a violinist producing unpleasant sounds in the adjacent room. But if used of a bearded individual dressed in high heels and wearing a long dress, earrings and lipstick, it might seem to suggest that the referent is somehow trying to "pass" (and not succeeding), is "really" male though apparently engaging in a feminine self-presentation. Referring to young babies, no matter what their genital appearance, as *they*, might begin to move us nearer to a stage where there are real live options to presuppos-

ing gender attribution in English singular third-person reference. Already, many health professionals now routinely use *they* to refer to people in the process of sex/gender change.

Many languages do not mark gender in third-person pronouns. Finnish is one such language. The singular third-person pronoun *hän* can translate either *she* or *he*, and in many contexts where English would require a pronoun Finnish (like many other so-called pro-drop languages⁵ allows its omission. Interestingly, however, in a number of contexts where English speakers would use a singular third-person pronoun, Finnish speakers often choose a gendered noun—for example *tyttö*, which glosses as 'girl.' Thus though third-person pronouns do not force genderization in Finnish, third-person reference is often genderized anyway.

In spoken Mandarin Chinese, there is no gender distinction for third-person pronouns, although writing now does make such a distinction. In transcribing speech, however, there are often no grounds for using *he* rather than *she* (or vice versa) to translate a third-person pronoun into English, and some linguists do now use *he* or *she* or something similar. For a long time, however, *he* was routinely used, even in contexts where the English form implied maleness and the Chinese being translated did not.

GENDER (DIS)AGREEMENT

The first-person pronoun in French is not itself gendered, but adjectives agree with it according to the ascribed sex of its referent, the speaker. The effect, of course, is to genderize first-person discourse. A French-speaking girl, for example, learns to say "*je suis heureuse*" to express her happiness, whereas a boy learns to say "*je suis heureux*." Saying *heureuse* rather than *heureux* is one way that one constructs oneself as a girl or a woman, not a boy or a man. The "agreeing" forms impute a sex to the referent of *je*, even though that first-person pronoun does not itself carry grammatical gender. One cannot avoid self-attributions of gender using French first-person discourse as Sarah Caudwell's Hilary could in the English first person. When people talk about themselves in French (or any of a number of other languages with grammatical gender), they must frequently superimpose the message "I am female" or the message "I am male."

5. **pro-drop languages** languages such as Finnish or Spanish that do not require an explicit subject. In these languages, the subject can be determined by prefixes or suffixes on the verb. English allows subjectless constructions in very limited and informal contexts, as in the often-parodied advertising slogan "Got milk?"

At the same time, this gender agreement morphology can be a communicative resource for challenging permanent dichotomous gender assignments. Anna Livia (1997) shows that a first-person narrator in French can play with gender (dis)agreement possibilities to present the self sometimes as female, sometimes as male. She offers examples of transsexuals as well as others resisting conventional gender arrangements by exploiting gender-bending possibilities offered by French grammatical gender. The Hindi-speaking hijras⁶ of India use not only gendered pronouns but also gender agreement markers to speak of themselves and others strategically as female or male, according to the situation. Grammatical gender, thus, can be a resource for challenging standard gender binarism.

What happens in a language with gender agreement when plurals are 25 used or a choice that (usually) indicates sex must be made when the referent's sex is unknown? In the Indo-European languages like French and Hindi, the "rule" is to use the masculine in such cases. Again, there is the possibility of playing with this "rule" to express challenges to the dominant gender order. But there is a strong tendency in languages with grammatical gender for the masculine forms to function as defaults. In his extensive discussion of grammatical gender in languages around the world, Corbett (1991) notes this tendency. At the same time, he notes some exceptions to it, languages where females are (linguistically) the default humans and males the special case. Among others, he mentions the Nilotic language Maasai, Iroquoian languages in general, and Seneca in particular, and the Arawakan language Goajiro (spoken by people in the Guajira peninsula in South America). In Goajiro, one gender is used for nouns referring to male humans and a very few other nouns (e.g., the words for "sun" and "thumb"), whereas most nouns are in the other gender. This nonmasculine gender includes nouns referring to female humans as well as nouns referring to nonhuman animals, inanimates, and most everything else; it is used whenever sex is not known (Corbett pp. 220–221). Unfortunately, we cannot provide any information on the social gender practices in which these (relatively rare) "marked masculine" gender systems have entered into communicative practices. In addition, Corbett notes that some languages offer an alternative to either masculine or feminine agreement in cases where sex is unknown: the Polish neuter, for example, is sometimes used much like the English singular *they* to avoid signaling either femaleness or maleness. In Archi, a Northeast Cau-

6. **hijras** a category of men in India who dress as women, often take male partners, and sometimes undergo castration or penectomy. They play an important role in Indian society as performers at celebrations.

casian language with four genders, two of which are used for human males and human females respectively, one of the other two genders (which normally is used mostly for abstracts) can be used for agreement with nouns like *child* or *thief* if the sex of (potential) referents is unknown, unimportant, or undetermined.

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about the text

1. Why, according to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, do people not "sit back and simply allow the baby to become male or female" (paragraph 2)? Do you think the authors advocate such a means of child-rearing? Why or why not?
2. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet are very careful about gender references in their own writing. They don't use the generic "he" to refer to both males and females, and they manage to avoid the sometimes awkward "he or she." Read their essay carefully and note the ways in which they handle generic references. What do they do? Is it effective? Is it smooth? Why or why not?

on language use

3. What do Eckert and McConnell-Ginet mean by the phrase "gender work" (paragraph 1)? What things have you done today that could be classified as gender work? What aspects of your life are strongly influenced by gender work? Is there any part of your life that is untouched? Why or why not?
4. The authors suggest that any sales clerk would likely be "perplexed" if you stated that you didn't know or care about the gender of the baby you were buying a gift for. Test their hypothesis. Go to a store with a classmate and ask for information or help buying a baby gift. If the clerk asks the gender of the baby, say that you don't care or

doesn't matter to you. Pay attention to the response; take notes once you've left the store so that you can remember all the details. Discuss your results with your classmates.

5. What behavior or attitude might prompt you to call a child a "good boy"? A "good girl"? A "good kid"? Work in groups of three, with each member making a list of the qualities or criteria for one of those categories. Then, compare your lists. How is a "good kid" different from either a "good girl" or a "good boy"?
6. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet discuss how English discourse is automatically gendered any time third-person pronouns are used. How long could you go in conversations without using gendered references? Try it for one day. Avoid third-person singular pronouns by using singular "they." Instead of saying "girlfriend" or "boyfriend," use an ungendered term like "sweetheart"; use "spouse" instead of "husband" or "wife," "sib" instead of "sister" or "brother," etc. Discuss your experience with two or three classmates. What terms were most successful for you? When was it difficult to avoid gender references? Why? How did you feel about the experience? Were your conversation partners confused? Why or why not?

for writing

7. Read Lynda Willer's essay on baby cards, "Welcome to Your World, Baby," in this chapter, and make a similar survey of ten or twelve birthday cards for four- and five-year-olds (It is not necessary to purchase the cards; you can take notes in the store. It may be helpful to work in pairs to collect your data). Are there any that are ungendered? How are the girls' cards and the boys' cards different? Some of the cards in this category are directed at the kids themselves, while some are intended mainly for the parents. What gender differences do you find between those two broad categories? Write a report on your results, focusing mainly on the linguistic elements of the cards—the words themselves and the visual effect of the lettering. You may also want to talk about the colors and images; draw ideas from Willer's essay about what elements to look for.
8. Many parents choose to find out the gender of a baby before it is born. How might this practice affect the "gender work" that parents do in the first days or weeks of a baby's life, or even before it's born? Write an essay in which you explore how knowing a baby's gender before it arrives could affect the "gender work" done on its behalf.

What's Language Got To Do
With It?
Edited by Keith Walters &
Michael Brady
New York, W.W. Norton, 2005

LINDA WERTHEIMER AND C
ALL THINGS CONSIDERED

How to Sound M Feminine

FROM NPR NEWS, it's ALL TH
Linda Wertheimer. The vo
defining human characteri
recognition to family members
stars.

(Soundbite of movie)

Ms. Marilyn Monroe: Oh, Josep
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Wertheimer: But what makes a
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